

Comments on James Reston Article
New York Times, 2 February 1966

Mr. Reston has used the correct VC/PAVN requirements figure of 12 tons per day for the current level of fighting. Although he shows an awareness that the VC rely on foreign sources for many of their requirements, it is not clear whether he knows that the 12 tons per day is the requirement for outside logistic support only. It does not, for example, include the requirement for food which essentially is all obtained from within South Vietnam.

We are not aware of the source of the 200-ton figure used by Mr. Reston. The highest figure agreed to by the intelligence community is 165 tons a day from outside sources for 155 battalions if the level of combat increased to the point where each of the 155 battalions engaged in combat once in every 3 days. At one time the community did accept a figure of 150 to 200 tons daily for the cumulative throughput capability of the Lao corridor for the current dry season. Mr. Reston may have misinterpreted the 200 ton throughput capability figure as a requirements figure. It is also unclear what Mr. Reston means when he talks about every VC unit being "engaged all the time". If this means that every battalion is engaged in combat every day, this is an assumption that has never even been considered by the intelligence community. He is correct, however, when he talks about the Viet Cong main forces converting to a new weapons system which will increase logistic requirements from abroad.